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ABSTRACT

The policy statement for staff development in migrant education first gives a brief history of migrant children, their mobility patterns, and educational practices. It explains that, if migrant children are to have successful experiences in the succession of schools they attend, it will be because of the staff. The most important service a school or community can provide the migrant child is a staff trained to meet his special needs. Despite this, however, there has been no national strategy or funding for staff development, which has seriously impeded achieving the intent of the Title I Elementary and Secondary Education Act migrant amendment. Therefore, the preparation of staff to work with these children must become a national priority in migrant education. Staff development programs hould include training in: (1) helping the migrant child adapt to each new environment; (2) learning to adapt to and work with culturally and ethnically different groups; (3) learning what effect migratory farmwork has on the lives of these children; (4) helping the child better his self concept; and (5) using "process approach" skills to help children meet new problems and situations. Recommendations for policy implementation and for leadership in staff development programs are also given. (KM)

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A POLICY STATEMENT ON STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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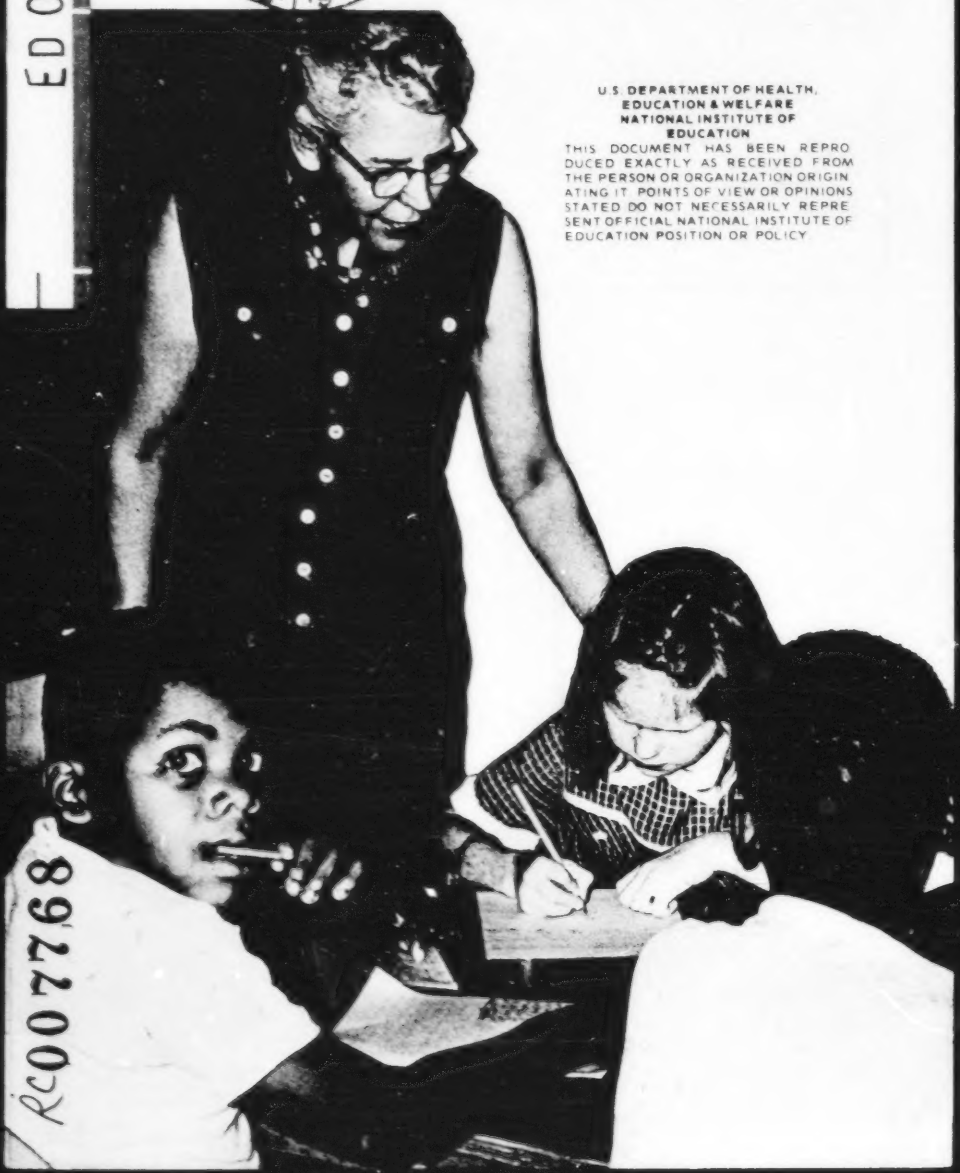

RC007768

A POLICY STATEMENT

ON

STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR MIGRANT EDUCATION

Authorized by the Conference on Staff Development for Migrant Education held at the Seabury Conference Center, Greenwich, Connecticut, February 28-March 2, 1973.

Migrant children share with other disadvantaged children poverty, language and culture differences, low self-esteem, confused attitudes about the value of their own culture, and wisdom beyond their age about *poor people* in American society. These factors, combined with poor nutrition and untreated medical and dental problems, serve as interfering variables in the child's ability to achieve academically. The feature that sets the migrant child apart from other disadvantaged children is his mobility. His educational and community experiences are *drop-ins* of various lengths.

Migrant children, following and working with their parents, travel along three major routes: from Florida up the East Coast; from Texas through the mid-West; and from Texas, Arizona and California throughout the Rocky Mountain and West Coast states. The migrant child's longest *drop-in* experience is usually in his home-base state: principally, Florida, Texas, Arizona and California. The school term in these areas, like schools everywhere, is about 180 days. How many days the migrant child is in his home-base school depends on when his family leaves in the spring and when they return in the fall. As his family moves North he may spend a few weeks in a school or schools on the way and repeat the *drop-in* pattern in the fall. The summer months, if his family remains in one area long enough, provide three to six weeks of special schooling for the migrant child. Like all children, migrant children have fears and anxieties about the next school, the next community, but unlike other children, they never belong anywhere. As Robert Coles has said, "they are very much different from any other group of American citizens, because they lack a place of residence."

If migrant children are to have successful educational experiences in the succession of schools they attend, it will be the staff they come to—the individuals who provide an easy adjustment to a new learning environment, mediate instruction, provide health care, serve food, and supply transportation—who must create and provide these experiences. This means the most important service a school or community can provide the migrant child is staff trained to meet his special needs.

Despite this critical role of staff in the migrant child's education, in the seven years since the passage of the migrant amendment to Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) only a minimal amount of the quarter of a billion dollars that has been appropriated and distributed to the states is allocated for staff development. Expenditures for staff development have tended to concentrate on the preparation of teachers for summer programs. The majority of teachers who successively serve migrant children in the course of each year receive little or no special preparation to enable them to respond to the unique characteristic of the migrant child—mobility and the concomitant need to rapidly adjust to new teachers, classmates, schools and communities so learning can rapidly resume. With few exceptions, teacher training institutions have not filled the gap by providing students majoring in education with skills for working with mobile children.

In the priorities related to the education of migrant children, staff development has not been given the national priority needed to produce a sufficient number of individuals who are responsive to the needs of the highly mobile child who comes to him; who are appreciative of cultural diversity; who are skilled in helping the child accommodate and adapt to a new environment so he feels a sense of belonging; and who are highly competent in diagnosing and prescribing instruction to meet the child's academic needs.

There has been no national strategy nor national funding for staff development, and based on a review of staff development programs, national sample of classrooms, and testimonies from teachers, it is clear that the lack of national standards and the failure to earmark funds has seriously impeded the achievement of the intent of the migrant amendment.*

Therefore, the preparation of staff working with migrant children must become the number one national priority in migrant education with its primary aims the inculcation of sensitivity to the migrant child's special needs and the belief in each child's potential to develop, as well as the development of the all important skills to facilitate the child's adaptation to a new learning environment.

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*_Wednesday's Children_, Chapter V, National Committee on the Education of Migrant Children, 1971.

Gould, Karolyn R., "An Overview of Teacher Training and Staff Development Practices In Migrant Education Programs 1968-72," mimeo, 9 pages, 1972.

2. Evaluate existing staff development models and serve as a clearinghouse for dissemination of successful models and instructional materials.
3. Design, develop and validate new strategies and techniques.
4. Sponsor in-depth training for staff in pre-service and in-service programs.
5. Design, develop and validate packaged (i.e., self instructional) training materials for individuals and small groups who cannot avail themselves of training programs.
6. Serve as a resource to ongoing programs and to small rural teacher training institutions.
7. Coordinate local efforts to establish national credentials for aides and other paraprofessionals.
8. Direct a national effort toward developing a migrant education teacher training credential.

To achieve quality education through improved staff training will require the commitment and cooperation of all concerned. National, state and local education agencies, colleges and universities, professional organizations, private agencies, parents, migrant educators and migrant children themselves must become partners in this effort.

Only when the migrant child can enter any community, any school, and any classroom anywhere in this nation without fear and without recrimination will the job be completed. Each migrant child has a right to expect that he will be accepted as he is wherever he goes and that the education system has at least the basic skills to assist him to move ahead in the learning process.

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This Policy Statement was prepared by the National Committee on the Education of Migrant Children and endorsed by the following conference participants and members of the NCEMC Advisory Committee.

Gloria Alemán
Woodburn, Oregon

Austin H. Armitstead
Staten Island, New York

Clem Baime
Madison, Wisconsin

Linda V. Bain
New York, New York

Joan Boyd
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Philip Buskirk
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Louise Cason
New York, New York

Jesse Clay
Auburn, New York

Eli E. Cohen
New York, New York

Robert Coles, M.D.
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Billie Davis
Coral Gables, Florida

Dr. Wells Foshay
New York, New York

Maclovio Gallegos
San Luis, Colorado

Anselmo T. Garza
Harlingen, Texas

Angel González
Crystal City, Texas

Berta González
Sanger, California

Karolyn Gould
New York, New York

Dr. Shirley E. Greene
New York, New York

José Hernández
Riverbank, California

Ulysses G. Horne
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida

Mildred Jeffrey
Detroit, Michigan

Carmen A. Luciano
New York, New York

Dr. Gloria Mattera
Geneseo, New York

Dr. Leonard J. Mestas
Austin, Texas

Irene Díaz Nannery
New York, New York

Norman H. Perlstein
Stamford, Connecticut

Dr. Vito Perrone
Grand Forks, North Dakota

Dr. Ronald G. Petrie
Logan, Utah

Dr. Jeanette Ritzenthaler
Trenton, New Jersey

Dr. Milton Schwebel
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Bernice Schwebel
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Cassandra Stockburger
New York, New York

Dr. Lewis Tamblyn
Annandale, Virginia

Jesús Vega
Swedesboro, New Jersey

Herbert C. White
Oroville, California

Robert E. Youngblood
Raleigh, North Carolina

National Committee on the Education of Migrant Children
a program division of the National Child Labor Committee, Inc.
145 East 32nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10016

Staff development programs in order to provide these needed skills, attitudes and knowledge should include training in at least the following areas:

1. Staff development should provide all personnel with a recognition that because of the migrant child's mobility, his first and foremost need is to accommodate to each new environment as rapidly as possible so that he can attend to academic learning:
   a. All personnel should be skilled in providing each new child with a sense of belonging so he can attend to learning. The first week is especially critical in terms of the child exploring and getting to know his new environment so it is a friendly, not a fearful, place to be and to learn.
   b. As a further step in helping the child accommodate to his environment, staff should be equipped with information and techniques for assisting the migrant child to become a part of the community and for him and his family to utilize its services in much the same manner as a year-round resident.
   c. Teachers should be provided with techniques for rapidly evaluating the needs and skill levels of the migrant child on an informal basis so that placement in individualized and other programs can be expedited and the child will not be discouraged or handicapped by poor placement.
   d. Teachers should be skilled in techniques for organizing instructional programs to provide each child with a sense of accomplishment and success before he moves on, whether this be through individual instruction, small peer groups, or large group activities.

2. Staff training should provide all personnel with an opportunity to explore, examine and come to terms with their own feelings, biases and myths in regard to the poor, to ethnic groups different from their own, to migratory workers and to children who do not fit the orderly 180-day school pattern.

3. If personnel working with multi-ethnic migrant children are to be aware of the beauty of a pluralistic society, they must acquire a broader awareness of the diversity of American cultures, values, and languages. Such awareness can help the non-migrant child, and the migrant child, view his own culture, and each other's in terms of its strengths and help them accept each other.

4. All staff require a sensitization to the effects of migratory farmwork on the lives of children. It should build understanding of the psychological effects of periodic movement, of the lack of a permanent residence, and of always being an outsider, on the child's emotional and academic development. It should include first-hand experience with migrant camp living and with the realities of farm labor.

5. A child's positive self-concept is essential to his ability to grow emotionally and intellectually and to adapt to new situations. Staff should be provided with an awareness of the crippling effects of a negative self-concept, both in terms of social and emotional growth and academic achievement, and with skills for building positive self-concepts.

6. All children, but especially migrant children, should be schooled in the processes by which new problems are met to enable them to succeed in each new situation. The processes of the disciplines provide children with problem-solving techniques: they learn how to learn. Staff training should provide teachers with *process approach* skills.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of this staff development policy must receive immediate and concerted attention from both the public and private sectors. The U.S. Office of Education and state education agencies, who currently are primarily responsible for staff training, must work together with colleges and universities, professional organizations and private action groups to assure that schools which enroll migrant children have availab. to them adequate personnel who are trained to work with migrant children.

Even though present migrant education legislation does not specifically mandate staff development, it does not exclude it from the fundable programs. *The USOE should therefore give a high priority to staff development and take the initiative in getting the states to set a like priority.* Giving staff development this priority at the national level would set the stage for interstate cooperation of the states in setting aside funds to be used for this purpose on an interstate and nationwide basis, allowing for concentration of funds in the areas where migrant children receive their basic education.

Staff development programs should be designed to include all levels of staff. Administrators, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, as well as those who are responsible for the instructional program must be included. Further, at least some aspects of the training should be done together so that staff understands and appreciates the total approach to the child.

Parents of migrant children must also be given the same opportunities to participate as is considered essential for all parents; i.e., participating in the setting of standards; serving as consultants; and evaluating the effectiveness of the staff in educating their children. Recognizing the difficulty states have had to date in involving parents in any way, staff development programs nevertheless must encourage the education of parents for these roles as a part of their overall plan.

Colleges and universities must be encouraged to include for every student majoring in education a unit on the migrant farm worker and his children. It is not enough that future educators know about the poor and the educationally disadvantaged in general terms only. These institutions should likewise be encouraged to establish credit courses in migrant education and to consider providing career opportunities for administrators and teachers in migrant education.

Professional organizations such as the National Education Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers should establish subcommittees on migrant education for the purpose of encouraging improved staffing.

The appropriate agency or agencies should make special efforts to recruit and place in education career programs the youth from migrant families. The California Mini-Corps provides a promising model for such efforts.

Leadership Training

Obviously, no approach, national or otherwise, will be successful unless there is a corps of trained leadership to carry out staff development plans. There does not now exist either adequate staff for the schools or a corps of trained leadership to carry out such staff training. Implementation must begin with both the training of a national corps of leaders and the development of specific criteria for staff development programs.

Plans should be initiated immediately, under private auspices, to develop and seek funding for a national leadership training institute, established for the following purposes:

1. Develop criteria for all staff training programs which will serve as guidelines for designing training sessions and for evaluating staff development plans at the state and national levels.